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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 005411

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER PK

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN: CODEL SPECTER MEETING WITH CHAIRMAN OF JOINT CHIEF OF STAFF

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. In a December 27 meeting with General Tariq Majid, Pakistan's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Senator Arlen Specter and Representative Patrick Kennedy stressed the importance of U.S.-Pakistan military cooperation, support for Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts, and the potential impact of recent domestic political events, especially President Musharraf's November dismissal of Pakistan's Supreme Court. END SUMMARY.

FINDING BIN LADEN AND COMBATING MILITANTS

¶2. (C) Specter asked Majid about the status of Pakistan's efforts to capture Osama bin Laden. Majid replied that Pakistan continued to focus on locating bin Laden, agreeing that he could be in the remote Afghanistan-Pakistan border area. Majid stressed the need for more accurate intelligence in the hunt for bin Laden, as well as the importance of integrated U.S.-Pakistan efforts to locate him.

¶3. (C) Specter said that he understood Pakistan's military was experiencing increasing difficulty in exerting control over some of the tribal areas. Majid acknowledged there were challenges but pointed out there had been many successes as well. Majid observed that prior to 9/11 these areas had largely "managed themselves," but since then government forces had increasingly extended their presence into these areas, especially the paramilitary Frontier Corps. However, he added, these forces could not be everywhere and some areas were virtually inaccessible. The GOP had been steadily expanding the Frontier Corps and would continue to do so. Majid also noted that nearly 100,000 troops were supporting Special Forces efforts in these areas and Pakistan had increased the number of its border posts from 80-90 to almost 1,000.

¶4. (C) The discussion then turned to the deployment and sustainability of Pakistan's troops. Majid stated that of 190 infantry units, 146 were deployed in "hard" areas, such as the disputed areas with India, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Baluchistan. Majid acknowledged that Pakistan found it difficult to sustain these long-term deployments.

POSSIBLE EXPANSION OF IMET

¶5. (C) Kennedy praised Pakistan's close military cooperation with the U.S., a key element in the war on terror. Majid

agreed, noting that he would like to see the relationship become more broad-based, including participation in joint training and exercises. Both Kennedy and Majid agreed the International Military Exchange Training (IMET) program had proven beneficial to both the U.S. and Pakistan, and served as a critical tool in building relationships and developing capacity. Kennedy said he supported expanding the IMET program with Pakistan and would like to work with Majid to make this happen.

MAJID DENIES SECURITY ASSISTANCE DIVERTED BY GOP

¶16. (C) Kennedy raised the issue of the U.S. attaching conditions to Pakistan's use of some U.S. military assistance. He stressed that one of the primary purposes of such conditionality was to ensure the assistance reached the Pakistan military. Referring to Majid's earlier remarks regarding sustainability of deployed forces, Kennedy added that it was critical to ensure Pakistan's forces received sufficient resources. Majid, however, dismissed the suggestion that the central government was not directing all U.S. assistance to support appropriate military operations. He insisted that the funding went to support forces in the field "indirectly.⁸ He added, referring to the policy the UN uses to determine compensation for countries contributing forces to UN operations, that the U.S. should use the UN approach to improve U.S. CSF utility to compensate people hurt by collateral damage during operations against militants, provide compensatory expenses for soldiers, families, etc.

MAJID URGES PASSING OF ROZ LEGISLATION

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¶17. (C) Kennedy observed that the struggle against extremists was not just a military one, but a political one as well. Majid agreed, saying that military action could only be one element of a successful strategy in combating militants. He pointed to the urgent need for improved social infrastructure and economic opportunities in these areas, adding that the proposed Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) could prove very helpful. He expressed his hope that U.S. legislation authorizing the ROZs would soon be expedited.

PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL SECURE

¶18. (C) Specter then raised the issue of the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Majid responded that Pakistan engaged closely and systematically with the U.S. to ensure effective custodial controls were in place and that the National Command Authority was firmly in control of all nuclear weapons. He added that only Pakistan's civilian leadership had authority to order use of the weapons.

¶19. (C) Specter asked Majid if, in his opinion, Pakistan and India could one day create a nuclear weapon-free zone on the subcontinent. Majid said it was possible and Pakistan had already "made the offer," but that India would need to take the first step toward disarmament for Pakistan to follow suit. Majid speculated, however, that India was unlikely to do so as it had "a more global outlook" militarily, whereas Pakistan's primary concern was defense (from India).

¶110. (C) Specter shared his concerns regarding Iran's potential development of nuclear weapons and asked what Pakistan's position would be regarding military options in addressing the threat, should it arise. Majid indicated that Pakistan had no problem with Iran developing a nuclear program for peaceful purposes and would definitely oppose any military action against Iran, saying that such action would create dangerous instability in the region.

&IRRITANTS8 TO U.S.-PAKISTAN RELATIONSHIP

¶111. (C) Majid then asked to make a few remarks about the

U.S.-Pakistan relationship; he described it as excellent, but noted that occasionally there were some irritants, including:

- Official U.S. statements that cast doubts on the sincerity of Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts;
- Media reports and commentators who suggest Pakistan's nuclear weapons are not secure;
- U.S. government decisions to withhold reimbursements and to attach conditions, thus suggesting Pakistan is not a trustworthy partner;
- Criticisms of Pakistan's internal political decisions

Such comments and actions, Majid concluded, undermined the relationship and reflected a lack of understanding of Pakistan.

CODEL RAISES ISSUE OF MUSHARRAF,S ACTION AGAINST COURTS

¶12. (C) Specter and Kennedy thanked Majid for his frankness, but pointed out that recent political events in Pakistan, specifically Musharraf's removal of the Supreme Court and detention of the Chief Justice, had prompted serious concerns in the U.S. government regarding Pakistan's commitment to democratization. Specter also pointed out that, while the U.S. government sometimes had internal disagreements, they did not result in dismissal of the Supreme Court.

¶13. (C) Majid countered that the U.S. Chief Justice was not engaged in petty political maneuvers and that the U.S. had taken 200 years to develop its current stable form of government. Majid also observed that, in addition to engaging in partisan politics, the Supreme Court had released dangerous militants for political reasons. Sen. Specter agreed that such militants should not be at large, but pointed out that it appeared to many that Musharraf had taken action primarily to preserve his political power.

¶14. (C) Majid disagreed with this analysis strenuously, saying that the judiciary had reduced the government to a state of paralysis with its politically motivated decisions.

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President Musharraf, he asserted, had been forced to take action.

¶15. (C) Majid added that some in the U.S. did not see "the big picture" in Pakistan, and how seemingly innocuous U.S. actions could negatively impact Pakistan and its economy, including security measures for U.S. officials in Pakistan and the issuance of travel advisories. He said the USG needed a fuller awareness of the many issues with which Pakistan was grappling.

¶16. (U) This cable was drafted after the CODEL departed.

PATTERSON